Tamil Nadu graffiti – The branch symbol represents Sastha

This “branch” symbol is identified as a spear (vel -Tamil) by Gurumurthy. I disagree with his interpretation. In my opinion, it follows the same meaning as in IVC inscriptions. In the IVC script, a branch symbol indicates the word “Sastha”. Sastha means god. Read my article, "Branch Symbol Indicates the Word Sastha," for more information. (2)

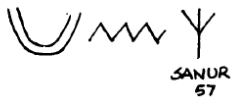
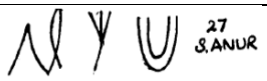
17. 	Kavu means sacrifice	Mountain god Varuna	Sastha means god	Read from left to right.
18.	Kavu	Sastha	Varuna	Read from right to left
19.	sastha	kavu	Varuna	Read from right to left
20.	Varuna	sastha	kavu	Read from right to left
21. 	pithru	Sastha	kavu	Read from right to left

Table 1 Sanur graffiti

The table above is an extract from the Sanur graffiti. This extract is from the book of Gurumurthy, page no. 134 and 135. (1) This extract gives some details about the direction of graffiti writing. It can be seen that the direction of writing is bidirectional, allowing for both right-to-left and left-to-right movements. However, the meaning can be well understood because it is an ideogramic way of writing, not phonetic writing. Just like the IVC script, the TN graffiti is also written in an ideographic way.

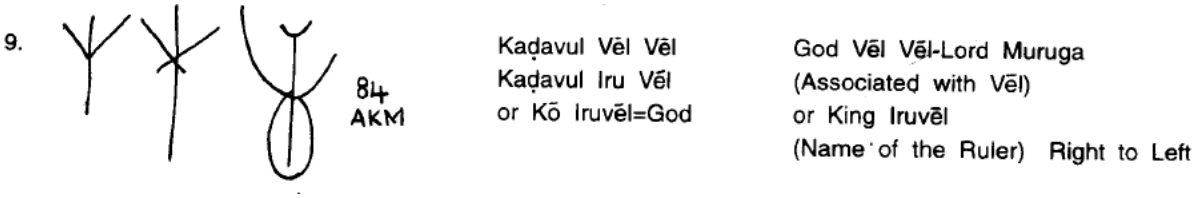
10.	Seated on an animal	-do-	Seated but shown as if standing on an animal.

This graffiti shows the sastha (god) seated on a throne, but Gurumurthy says the god is seated on an animal. Of course, the throne symbol is equivalent to the heaven symbol, which was discussed separately earlier. This figure is located on Page 53 of Gurumurthy's

book. Most likely, this graffiti depicts the Hindu god Varuna seated on his throne. The handle-like symbol may be the weapon of Varuna, the thunderbolt.

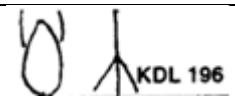
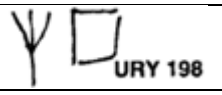
Vallam, where archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of rock-cut shrines and a fortified town, is located near the Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu, about 12 km southwest of Thanjavur city. Vallam is an archaeological site belonging to the Prehistoric to Modern period (10,000 BCE to 1900 CE).

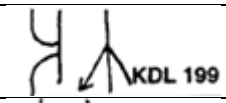
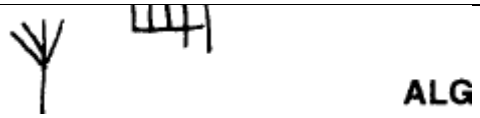
The graffiti above, from Kodumanal, as referenced on the page. no.137 of Gurumurthy's book. Here, the branch symbol is drawn in an inverted fashion, which is different; it could mean the "Ka" symbol (Hand symbol). read the article "Ka" means soul of the dead person for more details.



In the graffiti on page 132. Gurumurthy says this symbol indicates god, which needs verification. (1) (2) When two branch symbols are drawn together, it indicates two hands, which means "Ka" (soul). whereas this symbol indicates the word "protection". Read the article about Tamil Nadu graffiti for more information.

The above graffiti is from Brahmagiri, Karnataka. Brahmagiri, a significant archaeological site with excavations, is situated in the Chitradurga district of Karnataka, India. This graffiti displays a modified version of the "Branch" symbol. "X" refers to the god "X", that is, Varuna.

		This grafiiti is from kodumanal. Here, the branch symbol is inverted, which is different from the sastha symbol. It means "ka"(soul) here. Or it could have meant Karkida Sastha as well.
		This graffiti is from Savana Durga, Magadi, Ramanagara, near Bangalore, Karnataka. It reads as 'x-sastha,' which means Varuna Sastha; "X" could refer to any god of death, such as Enlil or Osiris. We don't have a definitive answer for the god of death among the ancient Tamils. Shiva is a later-day god, hence the possibility of Varuna. One notable point is that the branch symbol is drawn in an inverted fashion.
		This graffiti is from Uraiyur, Trichy. The square symbol represents heaven, or an iron plate in the sky, as per the ancient Egyptian concept. The god of heaven was possibly Varuna at that time.

		This graffiti is from Kodumanal, Erode district. The god's name is unclear (possibly a modified form of Karkida). However, it is followed by the sastha symbol (Branch symbol).
		This graffiti is from Kodumanal; it differs from the other branch symbols discussed so far. It shows two branches. The possibility is that it differs from the Sastha symbol. It could be indicating the "Ka" symbol (Upraised hand symbol).
		This graffiti is also from kodumanal. It is definitely different from the "Sastha" symbol. It indicates the "Ka" symbol with inverted hands.
		This graffiti is from Alagarai, near Kulithalai. The branch symbol is drawn better. It really looks like a branch. The second symbol may be the "offering" symbol. It can be read as Sastha being offered to or as an offering to Sastha. Alternatively, it could be interpreted as representing four gods of the four directions.
		All these graffiti are from page number 297 from the book of Gurumurthy

References

1. **Gurumurthy .S.** *Deciphering the Inus script.* Chennai. : University of Madras, Chennai., 1999.

2. **Jeyakumar(Sastha).** Branch_symbol_indicates_the_word_Sastha. *academia.edu.* [Online] 2016. https://www.academia.edu/31658123/Branch_symbol_indicates_the_word_Sastha..